

“Faith, Love, Hope!”

I. INTRO:

- A. **Financial crisis:** Now is the time for the Church to do as it has always done in difficult times:
1. **[1] To reach out** to those who are hurting **[2] To give hope** to those who fear.
 - [3] To point** to the God who owns “*the cattle on a thousand hills*”.

II. Book INTRO:

- A. In Leonardo Da Vinci’s famous painting of **The Last Supper**, our Lord’s hands are empty. And therein lies an inspiring story.
1. Da Vinci dedicated 3 years to this painting, determined that it would be his crowning work. Before the unveiling, he decided to show it to a friend for whose opinion he had the utmost respect. The friend’s praise was unbounded. “The cup in Jesus’ hand,” he said, “is especially beautiful.” Disappointed at once Da Vinci began to paint out the cup. Astonished, the distinguished friend asked for an explanation. “Nothing,” Da Vinci explained, “**must distract from the figure of Christ.**” Da Vinci focused attention solely on Christ by removing the distraction of the cup. Having removed the cup, he had to do something with the hand. The **left hand** was already outstretched just above the table, lifting, as if to bless and command. Now the **right hand**, also empty, was also outstretched invitingly.
 2. This seems to have been Paul’s purpose in this *postcard* to the church of Colosse.
- B. This was written during Paul’s imprisonment in Rome - **Acts 28:30**. [4 prison epistles]
- C. Where the book of **Romans** tells us **how to enter** into fellowship w/christ; **Ephesians & Colossians** tell us **how to abide** therein!¹
1. 1st we come **out of bondage**, then we are brought **into the banqueting house!**
 2. Ephesians & Colossians represent the *highest, fullest, richest* presentation of Christianity!
- D. **Relationship to Ephesus** - As one writer puts it, “Out of 95 verses in Colossians, 78 have a marked resemblance to Ephesians.”
1. **Difference:** In **Ephesus** the primary subject is **the Church**; **while** in **Colosse** the primary subject is **Christ!**

¹ Griffith Thomas; Colossians; pg.7

- E. **Epaphras** was one of Paul's converts while he was in Ephesus (3 yrs) founded the church.
- F. **Chapters 1, 2** are **doctrinal** & present Jesus as the preeminent *Creator, Savior, & Lord*. **Chapters 3 & 4** are **practical** & show how the believer works out the preeminence of Christ in daily living.

III. **FAITH, LOVE, HOPE!**

- A. **GREETING!** (1,2)
- B. (2) **Destination of letter** - **Colosse**, & **Laodicea**(see 2:1, & 4:16).
- C. 3 cities were near each other: **Laodicea, Colosse, & Hierapolis**.
1. Like the 3 holes on a bowling ball, these 3 cities lie in Asia Minor (Turkey).
 2. **Laodicea** - very **rich** & thus very **independent**.
 - a) Notorious for its **earthquakes**. It was destroyed a number of times, each time it rebuilt itself w/o the help of Rome.
 - b) That's why **John** wrote to them in **Rev. 3:17** **Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'** - and do not know that you are **wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked**.
 - c) In **Hierapolis** there was famous **Hot-springs**, & **Colosse** was known for its **pure Cold water**. So Jesus uses the analogy w/**Laodicea**, situated between the 2, **because you are lukewarm, & neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth**. (3:17)
- D. All 3 cities started out with **equal importance** then:
Laodicea became the **political** center; **Hierapolis** became the **trade** center; **but Colosse** was only a small struggling town...that never made it.
1. Lightfoot said, "**Colosse was the most unimportant town to which Paul ever wrote a letter.**"
 - a) An **unimportant town** maybe, **but** surely not an **unimportant people!**
- E. **THANKSGIVING!** (3-8)
- F. (3) Here's one of Paul's run-on sentences! (vs.3-8)
- G. **Thanks** - With the exception of *Galatians*, Paul's letters always commenced with thanksgiving.
- H. With **thanksgiving** came **prayer**. Like the **2 wings** of a bird which are required to enable it to **soar** into the sky.

- I. **3 reasons** are given for his thanksgiving & prayer: **Faith** in Christ Jesus; **Love** for all the saints; & **Hope** laid up in heaven.
1. Paul's **Trusty Triad** constitute the true Christian Life.
 2. Let's first see how he used these in his other writings:
 - a) 1 Thes.1:3 Paul wrote about their "work of faith, labor of love, & patience of hope"
 - b) 1 Cor.13:13 now abide faith, hope, love, these 3; but the greatest of these is love.
 - (1) **Love** is greatest because God is Love!
 - (2) **Faith** is trust that rests upon evidence, & leads to action.
 - (3) **Hope** is confidence in the future.
 - (4) **Faith** w/o love is cold, & hope w/o love is grim. **Love** is *the fire* which kindles **faith** & it is *the light* which turns **hope** into certainty." William Barclay
 - (5) **Faith** will be replaced by **sight**, & **hope** replaced by **possession**.
- J. **[1] Faith toward the Lord** - The 1st element of the Christian life, because it brings the soul in contact w/the Lord.
1. When **John G. Paton** was translating the Bible in the *Outer Hebrides*, he searched for the exact word to translate **believe**. Finally he found it: the word meant "**lean your whole weight upon**."
 2. Most people will say, "you need to have faith" but we must ask, faith in what!
 - a) It's not *faith in faith*, but faith in Christ Jesus...only!
- K. **[2] Love toward each other** - Gal.5:6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is **faith** expressing itself through **love**.
1. **Loving God** is seen in how one **loves his neighbor!**
 2. **What Is Love?**
 It is **silence** when your words would hurt. It is **patience** when your neighbors curt. It is **deafness** when a scandal flows. It is **thoughtfulness** for other's woes. It is **promptness** when stern duty calls. It is **courage** when misfortune falls.
- L. **[3] Hope toward the future** - Paul places **hope** last, because he saw **faith & love** springing from it.
1. How does the **hope** of heaven cause **faith & love** to come forth?
 - a) As pagans, the colossians had been "*w/o hope and w/o God in the world*" Eph 2:12
 - b) Then came the gospel from Epaphras!

- M. Hope is “**laid up**”(stored away, put away for one’s use)
1. This referred to a **Royal Persian custom**. Hellenistic rulers would lay up in store goods for faithful servants. [LKGNT]
 2. Spurgeon reminds us, “**we can labor w/o ever a present reward for we look for a reward in the world to come.**”
- N. **Faith** rests on the **past**; **love** works in the **present**; & **hope** looks towards the **future**.
- O. **PRAYER!** (9-14)
- P. Here’s one of the greatest passages on *Prayer Requests!*
1. C.F.D.Moule writes, “**Prayer makes 2 great requests: It asks for the discernment of God’s will & then for the power to perform that will.**”
 2. **Often we seek God’s will, but when we find it...do we do it?**
- Q. **Knowing God’s will!** (9,10)
- R. His first request: **that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will.**
1. In prayer we’re **not** trying to **make God listen**, **but making ourselves to listen** to Him!
 2. In prayer we are not trying persuade God to **do** something, **but** to find out what He wants **us to do!**
 3. Often we pray to God, “**Thy will be changed**” instead of “**Thy will be done.**”
 4. So, the 1st object of prayer is to **listen not speak.**
- S. And thus **knowing His will** we’ll be able to, “**walk worthy, please Him, & bear fruit.**”
- T. **To do this we need the power to do so!**
- U. **Doing God’s will!** (11)
- V. Life’s greatest problem is not to **know** what to do, but **doing it** (putting it into action).
1. We need **Power** & it comes by **Prayer!**
 2. If God only told us **what to do**, this would be frustrating! **But** He not only tells us **His will**, He also **empowers** us to **do it.**
- W. Through **Prayer** then, we obtain **Knowing God’s will** & we receive **the power** to be able to accomplish it!
- X. (12) The rest of this section speaks of **the Father**(12,13) & **the Son**(14-20).
- Y. The Father **Qualified us** - to make sufficient, to authorize (**due solely to God’s grace!**)

Z. **Conveyed us** - *Transferred*, brought us over.

1. A word used in the ancient world when one empire took over another. They would transfer it *lock, stock, & barrel* to the conquerors land.
2. So we're transferred **from what, to what?** 4 ways:

AA. **TRANSFERRED FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT!**

BB.(13) **Delivered us** from the power of darkness - (contrast from **light** in previous verse)

1. Without God you're groping around in the dark!
2. Lk.1:78,79 Through the tender mercy of our God, With which the Dayspring from on high has visited us; To give **light** to those who sit in **darkness** and the shadow of death, To guide our feet into the way of peace."
3. Jn 3:19 And this is the condemnation, that the **light** has come into the world, and men loved **darkness** rather than **light**, because their deeds were evil.

CC. **TRANSFERRED FROM ENEMIES KINGDOM TO KINGDOM OF THE SON!** (13)

DD. **TRANSFERRED FROM INCARCERATION TO REDEMPTION!** (14a)

1. **Redemption** = complete release, based on the payment of a price.

EE. **TRANSFERRED FROM CONDEMNATION TO FORGIVENESS!** (14b)

FF. **Forgiveness** - No longer a **condemned criminal**, but a **lost son** that has **come home!**

1. **Sir Walter Scott** had difficulty with the idea of "turning the other cheek." But Jesus' words took on special meaning one day when Scott threw a rock at a stray dog to chase it away. His aim was straighter and his delivery stronger than he had intended, for he hit the animal and broke its leg. Instead of running off, the dog **limped over to him** and **licked his hand**. **Sir Walter** never forgot that touching response. He said, "That dog preached the Sermon on the Mount to me as few ministers have ever presented it." Scott said he had not found human beings so ready to **forgive** their enemies.
2. **Jesus** has taken every **pebble, rock, stone, & boulder** you've thrown at Him, & still says "*I love you*" & desires to **forgive you**. **Isn't it time to stop today?**